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ABSTRACT

The Urban Learner Framework (ULF), developed by the Urban Education (UE) Project at Research for Better Schools, focuses on the teaching and learning requirements of urban students as the core of systemic education reform. The purpose of this paper is fourfold: first, to describe the ULF; second, to share experiences encountered when introducing the ULF knowledge base to a school district by describing a staff development program and reviewing a study of it; third, to analyze the dilemmas encountered in implementing the ULF knowledge base--especially those related to teachers' beliefs; and fourth, to suggest issues and questions requiring further research and investigation. The document is organized into the following sections: (1) a rationale for urban-focused restructuring; (2) new mind sets on culture and intelligence: the foundation of the ULF; (3) the ULF knowledge base; (4) the ULF staff development program in a Mid-Atlantic region school district; (5) training follow-up; (6) a study of the ULF staff development program; (7) study results; (8) discussions; and (9) issues for further investigation. The study results section examines: the overview program: a shift in perspective; Theme 1: cultural diversity and learning; Theme 2: unrecognized abilities and underdeveloped potential; Theme 3: enhancing ability development through motivation and effort; Theme 4: resilience; change; challenges to teachers' beliefs; and the efficacy to make needed changes. (Contains 51 references.) (LL)

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Focusing on the Professional Development of Urban Educators: The Dilemma of Opportunities to Change Teachers' Beliefs about Urban Learners

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A RATIONALE FOR URBAN-FOCUSED RESTRUCTURING 1

NEW MIND SETS ON CULTURE AND INTELLIGENCE: THE FOUNDATION OF THE URBAN LEARNER FRAMEWORK (ULF) 3

THE URBAN LEARNER FRAMEWORK KNOWLEDGE BASE 4

THE ULF STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN A MID-ATLANTIC REGION SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

Orientation Program 7

Theme 1: Cultural Diversity and Learning 7

Theme 2: Unrecognized Abilities and Underdeveloped Potential 8

Theme 3: Enhancing Ability Development Through Motivation and Effort 9

Theme 4: Resilience 10

Change 11

TRAINING FOLLOW-UP 12

A STUDY OF THE ULF STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM 12

Data Collection 13

STUDY RESULTS 13

Overview Program: A Shift in Perspective 13

Theme 1: Cultural Diversity and Learning 14

Theme 2: Unrecognized Abilities and Underdeveloped Potential 15

Theme 3: Enhancing Ability Development Through Motivation and Effort 15

Theme 4: Resilience 16

Change 16

Challenges to Teachers' Beliefs 17

Potential of Urban Students 17

Efficacy to Make Needed Changes 19

DISCUSSION 19

Presenting the ULF Knowledge Base 20

The Challenge of Change and the Dilemma of Beliefs 21

ISSUES FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION 23

REFERENCES 25

Focusing on the Professional Development of Urban Educators: The Dilemma of Opportunities to Change Teachers' Beliefs about Urban Learners

Among the many voices calling for school restructuring are those who (although few in number) clearly articulate a need for reform that will benefit urban students. One group that is working to achieve a clear direction for restructuring urban education is the Urban Education (UE) Project at Research for Better Schools (RBS), the federally funded Mid-Atlantic educational laboratory. This project is engaged in a long-term development effort to improve urban education. By critically reviewing the research, consulting with researchers and practitioners and testing theories in practice, the UE staff* are formulating a decisionmaking approach called the Urban Learner Framework (ULF) which focuses on the teaching and learning requirements of urban students as the core of systemic reform.

This paper explores the use of the ULF research-based knowledge in an urban school district in the Mid-Atlantic region during the 1992-1993 school year. The purpose of the paper is four fold: (1) to describe the ULF knowledge base identified by the UE staff to facilitate urban restructuring, (2) to share experiences encountered when introducing the ULF knowledge base to a school district by describing a staff development program and reviewing a study of it, and (3) to analyze the dilemmas encountered in implementing the ULF knowledge base -- especially those related to teachers' beliefs, and (4) to suggest issues and questions requiring further research and investigation.

A Rationale for Urban-Focused Restructuring

The need to focus restructuring on urban education arises directly from the comments and analyses of educators and policymakers who (1) state a critical need in our society for urban poor and minority populations to fully contribute to our economy and democratic society, and (2) decry the failure of current practices to educate urban learners, especially children of color, so that they can become productive citizens.

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* The work discussed here represents a joint effort of all staff of the Urban Education Project at Research for Better Schools.

For example, one such educator, the former Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, an advisor to the Business Roundtable and the National Center on Education and the Economy stated:

> We have a miserable performance record in educating low-income, racial-and language-minority students. Given the changing demographics of our nation, we cannot succeed economically or in sustaining our democracy unless we succeed educationally with those students with whom we have historically failed. We need to create the policies and structures that result in high achievement by those students as well (Hornbeck, 1992).

Recently, O'Day and Smith (1993), after describing current trends and issues, asserted that the proposed curriculum and performance standards are not enough to stimulate the education system into meeting the needs of poor and minority students. They maintain that beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, the social and economic conditions of the minority and poor, which had improved in the 1960s, deteriorated, and these conditions are likely to negatively impact student achievement. Furthermore, schools with large numbers of minority and poor students have less money and more problems that drain energy from implementing complex reforms, thereby diminishing the likelihood that reforms will reach the majority of urban schools.

Smith and O'Day in illustrating the inadequacy of current educational reform proposals to address the reality of urban schools, predict that the achievement problems of large numbers of poor and minority students will not improve and may even grow worse. Specific attention to the needs of poor and minority students and their schools in insuring the opportunity to learn the new curriculum standards will be required.

Many educators (in addition to O'Day and Smith) believe that the general restructuring programs currently available for restructuring lack sufficient depth to achieve urban school reform because they do not consider the context and specific needs of urban learners. Without these features, reform proposals will not significantly improve current urban achievement patterns (Ascher, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1993; Haberman, 1991; Newmann, 1993; Lytle, 1992; Passow, 1991). Urban educators must go beyond accepted general definitions of "good

teaching" and the belief that good teaching alone can improve the achievement of urban students to teaching that addresses the specific needs of urban learners (Haberman, 1991).

The UE staff recognize that focusing reform directly on the issues of educating urban learners as highlighted by the ULF is a critical step, however, that alone will not produce change. Restructuring is a tremendously complex, long-term set of events. It also must integrate the standard theories of human development and instructional pedagogy with those that are specific to urban learners across all areas of educational decisionmaking and practice. Limiting attention to either the process of change (e.g., decentralization, shared decisionmaking, collaboration) or the content to be changed (e.g., higher order thinking skills instruction, technology, curriculum integration) will not sufficiently alter student outcomes. Educational change, in the end, must be fully systemic and requires the collective, focused, and creative energy of educators, researchers, legislators, and leadership (Conley, 1991; McDonnell, 1989; Smith & O'Day, 1990).

New Mindsets on Culture and Intelligence:

The Foundation of the Urban Learner Framework

A new vision of the urban learner lies at the heart of the ULF which suggests that urban learners are capable, motivated, resilient learners who are able to build on their cultural strengths; it rejects current perceptions of urban students as at-risk, unmotivated, and culturally-deprived. This vision which challenges educators to examine their beliefs related to the ability of urban learners emerges from the research of social scientists who maintain that students' cultural experiences should be understood and valued by educators and connected to new learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Tharp, 1989; Rogoff, 1990; Cole, 1985). The ULF integrates current theory and knowledge about the structure and development of intelligence with that of cultural diversity and learning by explaining how culture (defined as the traditions, language and daily experiences, of the individual in the home and community) affects learning (RBS, 1993; Wozniak & Fisher, 1993). The framework replaces the idea that intelligence is genetically-determined, unitary, and fixed at birth with the

theories of psychologists such as Howard Gardner (1993), Robert Sternberg (1985), and Reuven Feuerstein (1990) who argue that intelligence is multi-faceted, modifiable, and mediated by the cultural environment. In sum, it helps educators re-examine their mindsets about the relationship of culture and intelligence to learning.

The Urban Learner Framework Knowledge Base

The framework includes four research-based themes that provide a clearer understanding about the new vision of the urban learner and challenge long-held, well-established beliefs about urban learners and school practices. The themes provide the information educators need to know about urban learners in order to help them achieve the new vision. The four research-based themes of the ULF knowledge base are:

- ***Cultural Diversity and Learning.*** Culture, defined by the ULF as the traditions, language, and daily experiences of the home and community, is a more powerful explanation of differences between student groups than either genetics or socioeconomics (Banks, 1989). Cultural differences related to learning are not deficits. Educators should align the curriculum, instruction, and school routines to support the cultural strengths and learning experiences of urban students (Ladson-Billings, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Tharp, 1989, 1992).
- ***Unrecognized Abilities/Underdeveloped Potential.*** Intelligence is multidimensional and modifiable. New understandings regarding the role of culture in cognitive development have clear implications for the need to transcend current thinking related to ability in majority and individual cultures. Educators should identify, develop, and support a broad range of abilities in urban classrooms (Gardner, 1993; Sternberg, 1985).
- ***Enhancing Ability Development Through Motivation and Effort.*** Classroom practices currently reward innate ability. A new model of learning is required in which motivation and effort are recognized as being as important to learning as innate abilities. Schools and classrooms need to focus on meaningful learning tasks. Educators need to create environments in which students benefit from their learning mistakes (rather than being penalized by them), are motivated and effortful in their learning, and fully engage themselves (Bernal, 1992; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992).
- ***Resilience.*** Many urban children grow into healthy, self-supportive, responsible, productive adults despite the adverse conditions (such as, violence, crime, drugs, poverty, and unemployment) to which they are exposed. These resilient children are stress-resistant, hardy, and optimistic; they display characteristics of social competence, autonomy, problem-solving, and a sense of the future. Educators need to move beyond merely identifying youth as persons at-risk to treating learners as persons with resilience (Benard, 1991; Winfield, 1991; Rutter, 1987).

The ULF integrates the new vision (as expressed in the four themes) with four areas central to the functioning of schools; namely, (1) curriculum, instruction, and assessment, (2) staff development, (3) school environment, and (4) management. Urban educators, at all levels,

make decisions continuously in these areas. These decisions need to be informed by the four themes knowledge base as well as understandings about the change process. Implementation of the ULF within schools and classrooms requires individual and organizational change.

Not only do the themes have a solid basis in the theoretical and professional literature, they also contain the kinds of information recommended for teachers who work with poor and minority children (Grant & Secada, 1990; Hollins, King & Hayman, 1994; Zeichner, 1992). Zeichner (1992) states, "With a few exceptions, there appears to be a common set of dispositions, knowledge, and skills which are needed to teach ethnic-and language-minority students, regardless of the particular circumstances of specific groups of students." This content varies from content that is frequently labeled multicultural (Protheroe & Barsdate, 1991). This literature, which is the core of the ULF, recommends that teachers learn about the cultural background of students and link it to curriculum and instruction. Some teachers, albeit few in number, are beginning to recognize the need for more knowledge about the cultural background of their students in order to provide meaningful educational experiences for a diverse student population (Sidler, 1993).

The ULF Staff Development Program* in a Mid-Atlantic Region School District

During the fall of 1992, UE and a Mid-Atlantic small urban district began exploring the possibility of engaging in a collaborative effort. After several discussions with the Superintendent, the Office of Curriculum and Assessment, and the Office of Staff Development, it was determined that UE would work with 32 teacher mentors who would use the framework to provide turn key training in their respective schools. Six research-based awareness programs were developed for the teacher mentors to focus building-level staff development on key themes in the ULF knowledge base that place the urban learner at the center of the teaching and learning process, as well as to assist the teacher mentors in their efforts to

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* The UE staff recognizes the presentation of the ULF in a staff development setting is only one important step toward systemic change.

support teachers and initiate school-based change. From September, 1992 through February, 1993, teacher mentors were trained to deliver one 40-minute ULF orientation and five, 2 1/2 hour awareness programs on the ULF themes and the implications for change. To enable entire school staffs to spend time exploring the ULF together, the superintendent closed the schools for staff development five afternoons in October, November, and December 1992, and in January, and February, 1993. The monthly, districtwide school closings were considered by the superintendent as a major shift from current staff development practices. By providing school staffs time to consider together the large-scale implications for change, the superintendent felt he was demonstrating commitment to the ULF and supporting his faculties in their efforts to begin the process of dreaming, thinking, and learning about the new vision of the urban learner.

The ULF sessions with the teacher mentors involved a 4 1/2 hour block of time during which UE staff members modeled the delivery of the school-based program and led a 2-hour analysis and preparation activity. The materials for each of the six ULF sessions included:

- a trainer's guide with specific details for conducting the 2 1/2 hour school-based staff development sessions
- masters of all program handouts and overheads
- evaluations for the teacher mentors and their school staffs
- handouts for the analysis and preparation component that allowed teacher mentors to discuss key content and process issues and suggest adaptations required to accommodate specific site-based needs.

Additionally, teacher mentors participated in another set of monthly sessions with UE to debrief the train-the-trainer experience and learn change agent skills such as facilitation, group dynamics, interpersonal skills, problem solving, and educational school improvement planning. These sessions were implemented as a way to begin to address the variability of training and change agent skills possessed by the mentors. Given the focus of this paper, only the ULF 2 1/2 hour sessions are described here in segments that include the purpose of the session and descriptions of activities.

Orientation Program

The Orientation Program was described as an invitation to spend the year dreaming, thinking, and learning about the ULF. The purpose of the session was to: (1) provide a rationale for educational change, (2) discuss new thinking about the urban learner, and (3) share information about the ULF. In a presentation format, the following key points were introduced briefly:

- the achievement gap between urban students and their peers in other educational environments
- the need to create structures in urban education that result in high achievement for the urban learner
- the need to shift our thinking about urban children from a deficit model to one that builds on students' strengths
- the importance of moving from fragmented approaches to integrated, systemic change
- definitions of the four themes, the change process, and implications of this information for teachers
- differences between past change efforts and the ULF
- expectations about participant involvement during the 2 1/2 hour monthly sessions.

Theme 1: Cultural Diversity and Learning

Theme 1: Cultural Diversity and Learning was introduced with an explanation that each theme has some core values/principles that contribute to the new vision of the urban learner. This theme stressed the importance of: (1) viewing difference as strength, (2) understanding that learning improves if cultural diversity is appreciated, and (3) recognizing that each person has a lot to offer.

These values and principles were reinforced through a structured experience in the form of a middle school lesson on discovery. For the purpose of the lesson, the UE person was a teacher, the participants were students, and the setting was a classroom. The stage was set by announcing that the unit of study focused on discovery and addressed some sensitive issues related to cultural diversity and learning. Ground rules were established for maintaining respect and tolerance and enhancing the opportunity to learn.

Other segments of the module included the following activities:

- Discovery of a Ball Field Exercise - a student-focused exercise on discovery. This activity drew directly on student experiences and interests before moving into the curriculum content. It allowed participants to practice surfacing different points of view (POVs) from three cultural groups and it gave them experience with summarizing their learnings and sharing during large-group discussions.

- Curriculum-Focused Exercise on Discovery - a lesson on the voyage of Christopher Columbus to America. The activity was modeled after the student-focused exercise and provided POVs from Native Americans, earlier explorers, and Columbus. Students represented POVs, compared and contrasted them, and summarized their learnings.

- Issues, Implications, and Strategies Handout - a quick summary of key messages and approaches for educators to consider. The material stressed the importance of assessing staff development, curriculum and instruction, and school environments to determine how to integrate these cultural diversity and learning concepts into organizational practices and policies.

Theme 2: Unrecognized Abilities and Underdeveloped Potential

The key emphasis in Theme 2 was on the shift from viewing urban learners as failing or low-achieving to viewing them as persons with unrecognized abilities and underdeveloped potential. The three principles addressed in this theme were (1) intelligence is multifaceted (2) intelligence is modifiable, and (3) individual and cultural differences related to learning are not deficits.

The scenario selected to emphasize these points was a lesson on photosynthesis adapted from ***Seven Ways of Teaching*** by David Lazear. The teacher mentors were asked to participate as urban learners as they engaged in the following activities:

- Random and Detailed Imaging Exercises - activities to practice visualizing, sketching what they saw in their mind's eye, and sharing their sketches with their peers. This segment helped participants develop their imaging ability in a familiar context before moving on to curricular activities.

- Guided Visualization of Photosynthesis - a verbal description of the the process of plants making food using the light and energy from the sun. Here teacher mentors sketched, in as much detail as possible, what they imagined after they heard the guided visualization. In triad groups they shared their work noting similarities and differences they found.

- Multiple Intelligences - an introduction to Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Teacher mentors shared in discussions about multiple intelligences and identified which of the seven multiple intelligences were emphasized during the photosynthesis activity.

- Issues, Implications, and Strategies - a quick summary of key messages and approaches for educators to consider. This material emphasized the need for system-wide changes that reflect ways of using multiple intelligences to educate and assess the urban learner.

Theme 3: Enhancing Ability Development Through Motivation and Effort

Theme 3 activities focused teacher mentors on the importance of shifting their perspective from the belief that the achievement of urban learners is determined by innate ability to believing that the effort of urban learners contributes substantially to their ability development and achievement. The two principles that supported this view were: (1) effort and motivation are essential to learning and (2) effort and motivation lead to learning and increased ability.

The first version of this module provided a series of activities to clarify the importance of student effort in the development of abilities and achievement. Events in the module included:

- An Overview on the Relationship Between Effort and Achievement - a discussion to surface common understandings about effort. This activity used a definition and descriptions of effort, an exercise to surface examples of teacher mentors and students exhibiting effort, and points from an RBS background paper on ***Enhancing Achievement Through Expectation and Effort*** to generate discussion among the participants.

- Barriers to Effort - a role play with teacher mentor volunteers. In a simulated classroom environment, a teacher and her students displayed behaviors that thwart effort as a way of generating examples of teaching/learning practices that need to be changed. The role play was followed by small and large group discussions about situations that create barriers rather than facilitate effort in the classroom.

- Strategies to Encourage Effort - an activity to surface ideas from the group. Teacher mentors worked in small groups and suggested ways to encourage students to be more effortful in the classroom.

- Issues, Implications, and Strategies - a quick summary of key messages and approaches for educators to consider. This handout communicated the criticalness of providing policies, leadership, and practices that demonstrate the importance of student effort in developing abilities and achievement.

During discussions with UE staff, mentors raised concerns about this module. Other modules used simulations to focus attention and make the various points. This module departed from that format and the delivery seemed somewhat diminished and less stimulating. UE staff members agreed to revise this module based on the issues raised. Although this version was not available for the turnkey sessions with school staffs, it was shared later with teacher mentors as a way to shore up their understandings about Theme 3. Revisions

included the development of two new segments; a scenario of Russell, a young man who exhibited many examples of effort that were ignored or devalued in school, and a classroom simulation that modeled a strategy for encouraging effort in the classroom.

Theme 4: Resilience

Theme 4, Resilience, included three guiding principles: (1) educators must emphasize the focus on student resilience and de-emphasize the focus on at risk, (2) teachers can help students develop resilience and make an impact on the negative forces they encounter, and (3) schools have a responsibility to create resilient classrooms.

A brief lecture on the attributes of resilient children sparked teacher mentor interest due to their stated lack of familiarity with this psychological research. The discussion served as the foundation for the other module activities developed to increase awareness about the attributes of social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of future and their relationship to student success in school. Activities included:

- The Success Map - an activity that strengthens the attributes of resilience in children. During this segment, teacher mentors assumed the role of an urban learner, facilitator, or recorder, and in triads participated in the Success Map activity. The activity teaches children how to use success elements (passion, vision, and action) that are closely linked to the resilience attributes to achieve dreams, aspirations, and goals. It also provides teachers with information to make better connections with their students and strengthen protective factors in schools.

- Processing the Success Map Activity - a small group discussion on reflections and reactions. This activity enabled teacher mentors to share perceptions and clarify understandings about the Success Map methodology and its relationship to the resilience research.

- The Resilient Classroom - a brainstorming activity to surface practitioner ideas and views. Teacher mentors considered how they would change classrooms to create teaching/learning environments that strengthen the four resilient attributes.

- Processing Resilient Classroom Responses - a large-group discussion to surface protective factors in schools. In this segment, the research on protective factors in schools was introduced, and teacher mentors used this information to determine how well their ideas strengthened protective factors and fostered resilience in children.

- Issues, Implications, and Strategies - a quick summary of key messages and approaches for educators to consider. This material suggested that educators need to provide policies, practices, structures, and support systems to help strengthen student resilience and academic success.

Change

The Change module was developed to illustrate the importance of gathering creative energies and making knowledge about the urban learner the central focus of change. The entire module offered issues, implications, and strategies for educators as they consider restructuring to educate the urban learner. In this module, emphasis was placed on three principles which suggested that: (1) knowing change principles makes it easier to achieve the vision, (2) knowing what to change and how to make change happen are important understandings, and (3) teachers must be change agents for the students.

During the opening activity, teacher mentors were asked to read scenarios of three schools with very different school climates and choose the place where they would prefer to work. After triad discussions about the reasons for their choices, they were asked to suspend their discussions until later in the session and consider the following change issues:

- Perspectives on Change - an introduction to a change model to guide the group's thinking. The model selected has three components (1) Future state or vision - What do we want? (2) Current state - Where are we now? and (3) Action - How do we get there? The power and importance of a compelling shared vision as a key starting point was demonstrated in this segment through a series of events including a guided visualization of a personal vision, a discussion of strategies to share the vision and seek common ground, and ways to move toward a shared vision.

- Today's Workshop Objective - a focus on vision. Given the complexity of the entire change process and the amount of time available for this session, the first component - vision - was the focus of this session.

- Your Personal Vision of the Future - an activity to initiate personal and shared visions. In triads teacher mentors resurfaced their school climate preferences, read a scenario of a third wave urban school system, selected and discussed their most appealing innovations and behaviors, and noted common elements.

- Context - a discussion on the implications for educational change. Teacher mentors discussed how educational change might unfold with the concepts of beginning with a personal vision, having it shaped by like-minded peers, and creating a network of change agents to move the vision into reality.

- What Can You Do? - a series of considerations for change. Teacher mentors considered a number of suggestions such as (1) beginning a dialogue with like-minded people including non-educators, (2) organizing dialogues around the ULF issues and implications, (3) sharing personal visions, (4) comparing and contrasting new visions with current practices, and (5) identifying one concrete step teacher mentors could take within the next few weeks.

Training Follow-Up

After the ULF turn-key training was completed in February 1993, the UE group met with the teacher mentors one day a month from March through May to complete the change agent program. During these sessions, teacher mentors sometimes shared their challenges and successes with their peers and sought advice or offered suggestions about ways to incorporate the ULF into the daily school experiences. During the last session in May 1993, mentors participated in activities to determine what form the 1993-94 ULF work should take in their district. A representative group also met with UE and central office staffs throughout the summer to continue those discussions and reach an agreement.

A Study of the ULF Staff Development Program

During the 1992-93 school year, a study was designed to determine how well the ULF content was understood as a result of the awareness sessions. During the spring of 1993, approximately one-third of the teacher mentors were selected to participate in an interview about their understanding of the ULF. Mentors represented a cross-section of school and grade level groupings. The sample included four teacher mentors from two high schools, one from a middle school, seven from elementary schools, and one from a special education school.

The original plan called for teacher mentor interviews to be completed before selecting the three schools in which to interview teachers. The three schools would be picked where teacher mentors demonstrated the most mastery of the ULF. However, the rapidly approaching end of the school year did not permit this option. District administrators consequently were asked to recommend three schools (i.e., one elementary, one middle, and one high school) where teacher mentors were strong and classroom teachers would cooperate. At each of the three schools, the mentor and/or the principal were asked to identify approximately ten teachers for RBS evaluators to interview. Because of teachers' schedules and willingness to participate, the final sample consisted of 9 elementary teachers, 7 middle school teachers, and 13 high school teachers for a total of 29 (2.1 percent of the total staff in these schools).

Data Collection

An interview protocol was developed to assess an individual's understanding of the ULF. Four interviewers not involved in the training conducted the teacher mentor interviews; two of these interviewers conducted the teacher interviews during the following week. The interview asked individuals whether they had attended each session and if so, to describe the following:

- the new vision of urban learners, and how important the shift (i.e., from deficits to strengths) in thinking was
- the principles emphasized in the four theme and change modules
- what they liked best and least
- next steps that needed to occur in their school.

Interviewees were all promised confidentiality. All interviews were taped. The teacher mentor interviews were conducted in a large staff development room at the district's administrative annex, the teacher interviews were conducted in either their school's library or another quiet space in the school. Excerpts, using interviewees' verbatim words from the tape whenever possible, were prepared for each of the above types. These excerpts were coded to indicate understanding of the framework, best and least liked features, and next steps.

Study Results

The results are organized into two sections. The first section focuses on teacher mentors' and classroom teachers understanding of the ULF -- the shift in perspective, and the four themes and change modules. The second section presents findings related to the challenges that the framework posed to teachers' beliefs about urban students as well as their individual and collective efficacy in using the framework to bring about needed changes in the district.

Overview Program: A Shift in Perspective

Seven teacher mentors (53.8 percent) were able to identify a shift from a "deficit model" of urban learners to a model that builds on students' strengths. As one mentor commented:

> First it's [the Urban Learner Framework] a major paradigm shift. Concerning the old, [it's] outdated how we view [how] urban [students] learn. I always knew a lot of this and a lot of the things we talked about. Every child comes to you with strengths. All teachers who are effective and efficient know that. You just have to have the proper

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> training, the proper experiences to give to the kids so they can learn. We want to work on the positive as much as possible.

Although few of the mentors were able to describe in great depth the shift in perspective, these seven were able to articulate a shift from deficits to strengths. Four teacher mentors (30.8 percent) were unable to articulate that shift. Instead, they were able to discuss one or more of the themes (e.g., cultural diversity, multiple intelligences, resilience) in describing the "new vision" of the urban learner. Two teacher mentors (15.4 percent) were unable to define any shift in perspective.

In all three schools in which we interviewed, teachers were trained by mentors who were able to articulate a shift from deficits to strengths. Nevertheless, only 10 of the teachers (34.5 percent) were able to describe a shift in perspective themselves. Seven (24.1 percent) discussed the shift in terms of moving from deficits to strengths while three (10.4 percent) mentioned particular framework themes. Despite repeated prompts, the remaining 19 teachers (65.5 percent) were unable to talk about a shift in perspective toward urban learners.

Theme 1: Cultural Diversity and Learning

Approximately half of the teacher mentors (six, or 46.2 percent) were able to connect the concept of cultural diversity to learning. Eleven of the 13 teacher mentors (84.6 percent) mistakenly thought that this module was designed to help raise the cultural awareness and sensitivity of educators, and noted that this type of training was desperately needed by their faculties.

All of the interviewed teachers were trained by mentors who were able to articulate a connection between cultural diversity and learning. Similar to the above results for teacher mentors, 23 of 28 teachers (82.1 percent) thought that this module was intended to raise teacher awareness and sensitivity to cultural diversity issues, and several echoed that cultural sensitivity training would be extremely beneficial to their schools. None were able to make the connections between cultural diversity and learning.

Theme 2: Unrecognized Abilities/Underdeveloped Potential

All 13 teacher mentors were able to discuss the concept of multiple intelligences. Some were able to recall specific types of intelligences and names of individuals associated with this research, and others were only able to say that "students learn through different avenues." Twelve of the 13 (92.3 percent) seemed to endorse the concept, while one argued that there is "still one intelligence, and there are different modalities...which you can either [use to] reach or express it." Many of the mentors were able to describe ways in which they had used this concept in their work with individual teachers; the direct classroom application of the content of this theme made it especially appealing to the teacher mentors. Nine of the 13 teacher mentors (69.2 percent) agreed with the project's belief that intelligence was not fixed, that it can be modified. The remaining four either disagreed, or gave conflicting statements.

Interviews with teachers focused on the concept of multiple intelligences, and whether they felt intelligence was fixed. In terms of the first, 17 of 26 (65.4 percent) were able to talk about multiple intelligences. As with the mentors, some were able to describe different intelligences and give examples of learning activities that would appeal to different types, while others were only able to acknowledge that students learn in different ways. Many of the interviewed teachers rated this module the most favorably, primarily because it gave them strategies or techniques that they could apply in their own classrooms. Few of the teachers responded directly to the issue of whether intelligence was fixed or not; a few acknowledged that intelligence was not innate, others gave conflicting opinions, and others simply ignored the question.

Theme 3: Enhancing Ability Development through Motivation and Effort

Six of the teacher mentors (46.2 percent) were able to articulate the relationship among ability, effort, and motivation. Six others (46.2 percent) were able to define the relationship among two of the three variables. The one remaining mentor (7.6 percent) was confused and could not articulate any relationship among ability, motivation, and effort.

The elementary and middle school mentors were able to define the relationship among ability, motivation, and effort. The two high school mentors were able to define the relationship among two of the three variables. Teachers' responses were unrelated to mentors' responses. Three teachers (10.3 percent) were able to describe the relationship among ability, motivation, and effort, 18 (62.1 percent) were able to talk about the relationship among two of the three, and the remaining 8 (27.6 percent) were unclear about the relationship.

Theme 4: Resilience

All 13 teacher mentors (100.0 percent) were able to define resilience and support the notion that teachers and schools can help nurture resilience in schools. Teacher mentors thought that this module covered material extremely important for their teachers.

Nineteen of 27 teachers (70.4 percent) were able to define resilience and 15 (55.6 percent) stated that teachers and schools could nurture resilience. Their comments generally echoed those of the teacher mentors, though 4 of the 11 high school teachers interviewed (36.4 percent) questioned whether they can nurture resilience in their students.

Change

The teacher mentors were interviewed about the concepts of personal and shared visions, and how the two were connected. Eight (61.5 percent) were able to define a personal vision, and ten (76.9 percent) were able to define a shared vision and make the connection between shared and personal visions. A few had reservations about the likelihood of shared visions becoming a reality in their particular school, or across the district. One teacher mentor (7.7 percent) chose not to follow the RBS module because she felt it did not address what her faculty needed to work on. The remaining mentors were not able to define either one or both concepts, or make the connections.

Teacher interviews focused on the same issues of personal and shared visions, and the connection between the two. All four mentors who delivered this module to the interviewed teachers understood the concepts of personal and shared visions and the connections between

the two. Nine of the teachers (34.6 percent) were able to define personal vision, and ten (38.5 percent) were able to define shared vision and the connection between the two.

Challenges to Teachers' Beliefs

During RBS' interviews of the teacher mentors and classroom teachers, it became apparent that the ULF challenged mentors and teachers in two ways -- their beliefs about the potential of urban students, and their beliefs about whether they can help urban students succeed.

Potential of Urban Students. The ULF asserts that urban students are capable, motivated, resilient and able to build on cultural strengths (as opposed to students at-risk with deficits). However, as one mentor noted, not all members of urban school faculties see their students in this light.

> Most believe that these kids are unable to learn, a waste of time, so let's just get them in and out of school. The new view is just the opposite. Most teachers will never accept this view.

If this mentor's assessment is correct, the very first tenet of the framework goes against many urban teachers' beliefs.

Other interviewed mentors and teachers questioned different themes of the ULF. The unrecognized ability/underdeveloped potential module provoked the most questions. Three of the 13 mentors (23.1 percent) and four teachers (13.8 percent) reported that the concept of innate intelligence was still prevalent, and that the implication often is that urban students generally are lacking.

> [thought that this was a thing of the past.] But when we presented, we realized that a lot of staff were still holding on to that. Born that way.
>
> Some people were just born with it, right, and some people aren't...I've taught a lot of years, and it seems like all the Asian kids, every time they come into the room, they all got As in spelling and knowing all the math and everything. There's got to be something there, I don't know.
>
> Most teachers buy into the innate ability concept, most teachers judge students based on what they perceive as that student's ability.
>
> I believe you're born with what you have. God gave each person so much, it's fixed. You can't go beyond that.

Once again basic tenets of the framework are challenged by such statements.

A few participants expressed reservations about the theme related to cultural diversity as a strength. Two teachers questioned the relevance of the cultural diversity as a strength theme:

> I am not sure that this concept should be part of the education process...When students are required to take a standardized test, there won't be one question on there about culture. We need to teach math. We need to teach English. The kids need to leave their culture at the door and be prepared to learn.
>
> I just don't believe that it's the root of everything. I just don't.

Four others questioned whether schools can nurture resilience in urban students, as portrayed by this comment, "I'm not sure if the school can help develop resilience in a student." Finally, two interviewees expressed doubts about the framework and its potential for influencing change.

> Most teachers in my school are hesitant about adopting new concepts. We've seen stuff like this before. We'll talk about it for a while until the next thing comes along. Things like this haven't worked before.
>
> Try to focus on the positive, try to build on it. Try to make them realize that they have their own strength...It's not being done enough obviously. I don't understand how they're going to shift to the positive...I guess we do need a shift, but I'm not sure it would be successful.

Although views directly questioning the ideas in the ULF did not come from a majority of the teacher mentors or classroom teachers interviewed, they do represent a point of view that will have to be overcome if the ULF is to be accepted and seen as a viable force in improving urban schools. In interviewing mentors and teachers, it also became apparent that they knew what was the "correct" or acceptable response. As one of the faculty cited above, innate intelligence was an "idea" of the past, and this mentor was struck by how many of the teachers in his building still felt this way. Our sense is that some of our interviewees told us what they thought we wanted to hear -- we see that in discrepancies between what they said in one section of the interview and another. For example, one mentor said that "all children can succeed" (thus expressing a basic concept of the ULF) but later went on to say "maybe only well enough for what they have" (suggesting a conflicting belief system).

Efficacy to Make Needed Changes

Some of the sample of urban teachers (9 or 21.4 percent) also questioned whether they individually, or collectively, have the energy or influence to make the changes called for by the ULF. Seven doubted whether district teachers or administrators would devote the resources and time to make the needed changes.

> People don't want to change. Some want to work and others don't.
>
> Having worked in this district, we get a lot of lip service, we don't get a lot of action. They can talk about making all the changes they want to, that doesn't mean it's going to happen...I have a feeling that what is going to happen is the same thing that always happens. When they want a change, they push it on the teachers, they do not give the adequate training or background in it, and then it doesn't work. I know there's a need for a change, and yet it's all lip service.
>
> It's not going to work, period. And here's why. Five years ago, we decided to make this change. Four years ago, we decided to make this change. Three years ago, we decided to make that change. Most of us know that next year, someone is going to want us to do something else. Why should we put our heart and soul into this change when we know it will change again?

These respondents did not feel that the conditions necessary for change were in place.

Discussion

The UE staff participated in the urban district staff development effort with the goal of learning how the ULF might be adapted and strengthened. This program was one stage of a multi-year initiative and the UE staff valued the opportunity to test their ideas in practice. For the purpose of this discussion, our learnings are organized under three headings: (1) presenting the ULF knowledge base, (2) meeting the challenge of change in urban districts, and (3) facing the dilemma of teacher beliefs. The first two topics will be discussed here only briefly, so that more attention can be given to the third topic which is the most problematic.

Presenting ULF Knowledge Base

The staff development program was designed to acquaint teacher mentors and teachers with the knowledge of the ULF themes and their implications for change. By using this

research-based knowledge in staff development sessions, the UE staff were able to learn how to better communicate it.

The teacher mentors generally appreciated the opportunity to learn about the ULF. The UE staff judge this initial experience with the staff development program as a positive one. Feedback gained from both the staff development sessions and the study above provide the staff with specific information on the ULF themes that is proving useful in their adaptation. Some examples follow.

Both enthusiasm and understanding appeared to be the greatest for the themes **Unrecognized Ability and Underdeveloped Potential** which presented the idea of multiple intelligences in a lesson format which had direct classroom application, and **Resilience** which taught about the attributes of social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of the future. Teacher mentors thought this material to be especially important for their teachers. Some teachers at the secondary school level were uncertain they could nurture resilience in their students; an issue which needs further investigation.

Information on three of the themes led to revision and/or expansion of theme materials for future groups. Although a majority of the teacher mentors and teachers mistakenly thought that the purpose of the **Cultural Diversity and Learning** theme was to raise educators awareness and sensitivity (rather than to gain understanding of the need to make connections between cultural experiences and classroom learning), this program led to much discussion and an expressed need for cultural sensitivity training for school faculties. In a revised format, this theme includes information on accessing students' out-of-school experience and infusing this information into classroom activities.

The overview program in which participants are asked to see a new vision for urban learners, in other words to shift from a deficit model for urban learners to one that builds on cultural strengths, has been supplemented through the use of a video. The video portrays an urban student that is successful out-of-school, but not inside the classroom. Hopefully, this vivid depiction of the concept in the new vision of the urban learner will increase

understanding. As mentioned in the section describing the staff development program, the **Enhancing Ability Development through Motivation and Effort** program was revised during the training because of the perceived need for a more stimulating format.

The content of these three staff development modules also seemed to present, in the experience of the UE staff, a challenge to some teachers beliefs. The study found general levels of understanding of these themes somewhat lower than other themes, perhaps in part due to the dissonance created. These beliefs are discussed in more detail in the next section.

The Challenge of Change and the Dilemma of Beliefs

Educational change within urban districts is always challenging. Real life in this context seldom approaches what may be ideal in theory. Sorting through a complex set of issues arising out of the ULF staff development effort and their implications for systemic change is beyond the scope of this paper, however. We will discuss two issues of urban change, briefly, before focusing on the dilemma of teachers' beliefs. First, we used a trainer-of-trainers model to transmit a complex body of information. Although the limitations of a trainer-of-trainers model for staff development are well known (e.g., if the initial group trained does not master the content then those they train will not have an adequate opportunity to learn the content), this was the only practical option to train a large number of teachers with the resources available to this district. By training 32 teacher mentors, the ULF knowledge base could be presented to all 30 faculties in the school district. Understandably, trainer-of-trainers models work best when the training competencies of the trainers are optimal (Sredl & Rothwell, 1987). In this district, many of the teacher mentors were new to a formal training role, and therefore, were developing training competencies. Not only were the mentors in a new role, many were learning the concepts and content of the ULF for the first time. Ideally, the mentors should have had a better understanding of the ULF before presenting the material to others. As training competencies improve, we would anticipate a higher quality of ULF turnkey training. While the trainer-of-trainers model is viewed as a practical (but far from perfect) means of delivering ULF

awareness workshops in an urban district, we also need to explore other ways of bringing this information to staff.

Secondly, we initiated a change process in the district using a staff development program. Initiating an educational change process through a staff development program is not unusual in urban districts. Staff development is often considered the logical place for new ideas to be introduced into a school district. However, a staff development program is only one of many steps in systemic change. The ULF was given a high degree of support by the superintendent when he supported the closing of the schools for the afternoon staff development sessions. Yet moving beyond the awareness stage with the ULF requires a reconsideration of school district priorities as many areas of decisionmaking need to be aligned with the ULF. There are multiple improvement initiatives underway in this district and educators at all levels need to understand that the ULF is not just another program to be implemented, but rather a point of view to be infused throughout all decisions affecting teaching and learning.

The real dilemma surfacing from our experience is the following: **given the limited time and resources available, how can urban districts provide the kind of professional development which can confront (and perhaps change) the existing beliefs and attitudes of educators who do not view urban students as capable learners?** Our interviews revealed that a group of teacher mentors and teachers held beliefs that conflicted with the ULF. The interviews demonstrated that some teachers or teacher mentors clearly questioned whether all children can learn, whether ability is modifiable, and whether an understanding of cultural diversity can be used to improve student learning -- beliefs which are basic assumptions of the ULF. In the experience of the UE staff, the staff development awareness material did help participants surface their beliefs related to teaching and learning for poor and minority students. In some cases, when the basic assumptions of the ULF conflicted with personal beliefs, cognitive dissonance appeared, setting the stage (we hypothesize) for further exploration and potential reconsideration of beliefs regarding students (Kagan, 1992).

However, such an awareness program is inadequate for accomplishing systemic change despite the relatively generous amount of time and resources that were committed to it by the district.

Issues for Further Investigation

Unfortunately, there seems to be no real guide for designing professional development in urban districts that may cause teachers to reconsider their perspectives on the potential of urban students. The professional literature on teachers' beliefs confirms the importance of beliefs for practice, but does not suggest how to alter beliefs that conflict with desired educational outcomes (Parajes, 1992; Guskey, 1986; Grant & Secada, 1990; Kagan, 1992). However, in a rather broad array of pertinent literature (e.g., on teacher beliefs, such as Kagan, 1992, Parajes, 1992, Peterson, 1991; on teacher change, such as Richardson, 1990; on professional development that will support reform agenda, such as Little, 1993; and on training teachers for diverse populations, such as Grant & Secada, 1990, McDiarmid, 1990, NCRTL, 1991, Sparks, 1992, Zeichner, 1992, Gomez, 1993), there appear hints at a direction for the type of professional development that holds promise for changing teachers' perspectives toward urban learners. Each of these sources suggest a long-term inquiry approach to professional development - one in which guided reflections on practice and experience over extended periods of time present opportunities for both challenging and changing existing assumptions, and for finding the teaching strategies that work the best with urban students.

During the second year of working with the urban district staff development program, we are starting to study further ULF challenges to beliefs and belief change through a 4-D process of:

- Dialoguing: engaging teacher mentors in discussions about connecting the urban learner framework to their daily experiences in the classroom.
- Designing: involving teacher mentors in collaborating with RBS to collectively develop strategies and plans for classroom implementation.
- Doing: requiring teacher mentors to establish a site-based core team of teachers and administrators who will engage in this same 4-D process and implement classroom strategies.

- Debriefing: sharing observations and reflections about instructional approaches guided by the urban learner framework concepts and discussing student responses to the interventions.

We hope participants will have the opportunity through this guided process to surface their beliefs about teaching and learning, engage in practice that demonstrates ULF principles, and examine any challenge to their beliefs that arises.

By better understanding what happens as teachers confront the assumptions of the ULF and use it in their educational decisions, we hope we can further refine a professional development process that helps teachers see the potential of urban students and gives them the knowledge and skills to help all student succeed in school. Urban districts have little prior experience in implementing staff development efforts that are ongoing and fall outside the workshop training model (Little, 1993). We need to find ways of establishing the time and resources necessary for the new mode of professional development we suggest. We realize that through our efforts alone we cannot discover all we need to know about these areas, and we hope that we will be joined by many others in our research and development efforts.

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